Recursivity and the Definition of MATCH in Italian Syntax-Prosody

Nicholas Van Handel
University of California, Santa Cruz

Early work on Italian prosody assumed Strict Layering [1, 2], and subsequent work still assumes that Italian lacks prosodic recursion [3]. I revisit three Italian processes argued to apply within the phonological phrase (ϕ): Word-Final Vowel Deletion (VD; mare azzurro → mar_ azzurro; [4]), Stress Retraction (SR; partirá Giulio → pártila Giulio), and Final Lengthening (FL; i litigi tra amici → i litigi tra amicci; [1, 2]). I show that VD is sensitive to smaller domains than FL and SR, motivating the existence of recursive ϕ. I argue that Match Theory [5] derives the correct outputs if and only if MATCH constraints are defined to see only XPs with a phonologically overt head [6].

In N+PP sequences like (1), VD optionally applies on the head N1 sapore. [4] argues for two prosodic structures: VD applies on sapore in (1b) but is blocked by a ϕ boundary in (1c). If FL applied in the same domain, FL would be optional on N1 in these structures. Instead, in (2b) FL only applies to the N2 mandorle; FL on N1 results in a marked structure in (2c) [2]. The two processes diverge in distribution, suggesting they apply in different domains. A similar divergence is observed in other syntactic contexts, while SR patterns with FL. Function words (D, P) are omitted from the schematization.

(1) a. Syntax TP[rimane DP[il NP[sapore PP[di DP[cioccolata]]]]] TP[V DP[N1 PP[N2]]]
   b. ϕ-Phrasing ϕ(rimane) ϕ(ili sapor_ di cioccolata)
   c. ϕ-Phrasing ϕ(rimane) ϕ(ili sapore) ϕ(di cioccolata)
   ‘The taste of chocolate persists’

(2) a. TP[ho VP[assaggiato DP[il NP[pollo PP[colle NP[mendorle]]]]]] TP[V DP[N1 PP[N2]]]
   b. ϕ(ho assaggiato) ϕ(ili pollo colle mendorle)
   c. ’?ϕ(ho assaggiato) ϕ(ili poillo) ϕ(colle mendorle)
   ‘I have tasted the chicken with almonds’

To explain this divergence, I appeal to recursive ϕ and prosodic subcategories [7]: VD is sensitive to all ϕ, while SR and FL are sensitive to Maximal ϕ, those ϕ which are not dominated by any other ϕ. The structure TP[V DP[N1 PP[N2]]] maps to either (i) ϕMax(V) ϕMax(N1 ϕ(N2)) or (ii) ϕMax(V) ϕMax(ϕ(N1) ϕ(N2)). VD takes place in (i) but not (ii) because (i) does not have a right ϕ boundary after N1. N1 is never final in ϕMax, which correctly predicts that FL does not apply to the head N1.

Match Theory derives the right outputs, but only if MATCH only sees XPs with phonologically overt heads. This is necessary to explain the prosody of ditransitives (3) and Subj+V sequences (4). If MATCHXP sees all XPs, the VP will be matched, which incorrectly predicts that NP and PP will phrase together to the exclusion of V (3c). Similarly, Subj and V will phrase together due to FP (4c). The new definition of MATCH ignores VP and FP, deriving the phrasings (3b) and (4b).

(3) a. TP[darò] VP[NP[libri] TP[PP[a Gianni]]]
   b. ϕMax(darò libri) ϕMax(a Gianni)
   c. ’*ϕMax(darò) ϕMax(libri a Gianni)
   ‘I will give books to Gianni’

(4) a. FP[DP[Papà] TP[mangia]]
   b. ϕMax(Papà) ϕMax(mangia)
   c. ’*ϕMax(Papà mangia)
   ‘Daddy is eating’

This definition of MATCH is not unprecedented [6] but is a departure from [8]. While MATCH may vary across languages, Italian is yet another language that deploys recursive ϕ.